

## HEALTH

# Hearing Loss Treatment Critical at an Early Age

NewsUSA

(NU) - Hearing loss is a subject often overlooked in the early development of a child. Whether ignored or unrecognized by a parent, misdiagnosed by a pediatrician or simply too unaffordable to correct; children are the ones who suffer the most.

According to a national study released by the Better Hearing Institute (BHI), an estimated 1.4 million people under the age of 18 have some form of hearing loss, that's approximately 1.7 percent of children. Only 12 percent wear hearing devices. Based on objective studies published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the BHI believes the figure could be as high as 15 percent due to early exposure to noise. That means many parents are not aware that their child has hearing loss.

In some cases, pediatricians mistakenly say the child's hearing loss is untreatable. However, even when doctors and audiologists suggest a hearing device, parents can still be hesitant and often minimize the impact of the child's hearing loss. When a child's hearing loss is recognized within the educational system often the only treatment is front-row seating, which for many is inadequate. National research also shows that 50 percent of parents do not pursue detailed testing when their infant fails initial hearing screening at birth. Most parental concerns come from either the stigma placed on a child and how others will perceive them if they wear hearing aids or



**The early stages of a child's development can be greatly affected by hearing loss.**

financial matters.

The BHI strongly suggests that parents need to realize the importance of the early detection and treatment of hearing loss and the resulting benefits.

So, why should steps be taken early when it comes to hearing loss in children? The following key developmental factors are compromised when a child has an uncorrected hearing loss: speech and language development, academic competence, social skills, emotional health, self-esteem, relationships with family members and cognitive development. Early identification and correction of hearing loss would allow the child to grow and learn competitively with his or her peers and therefore develop into a productive human being.

For more information on hearing loss, its evaluation and treatment, recognizing signs of hearing loss in children and prevention of hearing loss visit [www.betterhearing.org](http://www.betterhearing.org).